5: Brodrick--71 S-3 (1939) 1942 Laotians
116, 197, 174

"Siam has territorial ambitions. The Thai irredentists claim the Laos country (for the Laotians speak a language akin to Siamese, and they are evidently a Thai tribe left north when the ancestors of the present-day Siamese settled in the Menam plains), and they dream of lordship over the Thôs and all the Thai-speakers wherever they may be found—from the Burmese Shan States far into South-western China.

'You see,' said one of the Siamese to me, 'these people understand perfectly what I say.' And the stocky Thôs certainly did seem to have a general idea of what he was talking about."

7: Thompson--371 [2] J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians
116, 101, 174, 621

"The origin of the Laotian people is the object of much speculation. In all probability they were driven southward from Thibet and China in successive waves. They were and are to-day governed by petty chieftains and divided into families, each of which forms a community under the authority of the eldest son of its most ancient branch."

25: Brodrick--92 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-2
116, 174

"[HD: The Thais in Indochina] cannot have immigrated so very long ago,(1) since widely

1. In using the word 'Thai' to indicate 'speakers of Thai languages' there is no implication that the mass of the Thai-speakers in geographical Indo-China are necessarily of the same physical type as the Thai speakers in ancient China. Probably the mass of the Thai-speakers in Indo-China to-day are the descendants of men who adopted a Thai language from their conquerors.

separated groups such as the Shans in Burma, the Siamese, the Laotians and the Thos in Upper Tongking still speak languages which are so near akin that their speakers are mutually intelligible.(2)

2. It is quite possible that Chinese and Thai are just one language split a long time ago into two halves each of which has followed very different fortunes from its fellow. Spoken Chinese of the third century B.C. as 'reconstructed' very plausibly in recent years by sinologues, looks and sounds startlingly different from any sort of spoken Chinese to-day.

25: Brodrick--92 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-2
116, 174

Indeed, although, as might be expected, the early history of the Siamese and of the Laotians is mythical, we can probably set the time of the Thai-speakers immigrations into Indo-China at some time after the beginning of our era."

68: Mouhot--276-277 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians-1-2
116, 122, 174, 609, 631, 177.63 Siam
636.63

"Notwithstanding the small population of Korat, it is the chief town of a province, or rather an extensive state, containing eleven towns or boroughs, chief towns of districts, and a great number of villages, more or less populated. Fifteen days' [277] journey brings you from Korat to Bassac on the banks of the Mekon, and in the same latitude.

My intention was to proceed northwards, only stopping in the province of Louang Prabang, and then to descend the river as far as Cambodia. I hired elephants, and five days after, having passed through several villages inhabited by the descendants of ancient Siamese colonists who had taken refuge there in time of war, passing continually through forests of resin trees thinly scattered, I arrived at Ban Prang, a village where I discovered a ruined tower, and also the remains of an ancient temple. The next place I arrived at was Chaiapoune, the principal Laotian town in the north, and the chief town of the district. Here also I found ruins; but they were inconsiderable, and seemed more like a Laotian imitation than the work of Khmer Dôme. The inscriptions on the other temples in the province of Korat resemble those of Ongcor: here I found upon a block of broken slate-stone an inscription in Laotian characters, but which is unintelligible even to the inhabitants of the country. These, with some remains of idols and towers at the foot of a mountain in the district, were the only vestiges of that ancient

civilization which I discovered in the north. Everything leads me to suppose that here also were the limits which separated the kingdom of Cambodia from that of Vieng Thiane, destroyed during the last war which the Siamese raised against the Western Laotians or white-bellies. It was in this district that I was stopped in my travels by the authorities of the country, who treated me with great rudeness, and who forbade the people to let me have any means of transport, even after seeing my passport. I was therefore obliged to retrace my steps, deploring the expense and loss of time in the best part of the year, and which will cause me serious inconvenience."

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CHAPTER II
ETHNOGRAPHIC OUTLINE
PREHISTORIC HYPOTHESES

Laos is a geographical expression which does not correspond to any ethnographic reality. To be sure, within the last thirty years it has taken a place in the French Indo-Chinese Union, it possesses an administrative life all its own, and a political status, /101/ although vague, which does not resemble that of any other country. But if one wishes to trace the main lines of its history, or more exactly to study the succession of peoples' migrations which resulted in the swarm of races which inhabit it today, one must abstract it from its present political limits and situate it in the whole of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. Its river frontier has, in /101/ fact, never constituted a genuine barrier in the west, for the basin of the Mékong is separated from that of the Ménam only by slight undulations. Thus the Laotian on the left bank and the Siamese on /10/ the right bank resemble one another like brothers.

I L 174

The great obstacle is in the east. It is constituted by the Annamitic Chain which has divided the Indo-Chinese peninsula, from the point of view of race, religion and civilization, into two distinct sides: the eastern slope, which is the domain of the Annamites, a people of Mongol civilization; and the western /144/ slope which is occupied by Laos, Cambodia, Siam and Burma, "the abandoned rear guard of the peoples of Indo-European civilization" (1).

I L 174 101

1. Cf. R. Meyer, Notice ethnographique.

Between these two ethnic zones "the antithesis is more striking than between the Germanic World and the Latin World. The one, the Chinese zone, contains the yellow, impenetrable world whose fabulous past has imposed on the people of Annam, crushed down as they are in their coastal plains, the sacred prestige of its 'characters' which are to it what Pali and Sanskrit are to the races of Hindu origin, and Latin and Greek are to European peoples. The other, the Indian zone, has nurtured the slow evolution of the gentlest peoples of the earth and favored the blossoming of the

I prodigious Hindu civilization" (2).
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174 2. Ibid.
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/11/ We should not, however, conclude from these premises that the Annamitic Chain has always constituted an insurmountable barrier and that these two worlds which are so dissimilar never communicated with one another. On the contrary, they had quite frequent and extremely violent encounters which partially explain the kind of Tower of Babel which the basin of the Mékong forms today.

"Long ago," as J. Moura has judiciously written in his Royaume du Cambodge, "Indo-China was the closed field where the civilizations of India and China and doubtless too those of the peoples of central Asia came to try themselves and do battle with one another. These Mongol and Tibetan migrations must have occurred before the Christian era and must correspond to the time when internal wars devastated these regions and resulted in an overflow of the peoples of the North towards the Occident, the Orient, and probably too towards the South. In resume, it may be said that Indo-China was once the theater of political struggles, the land of confusion of religious ideas and mixture of races. The difficulties which we have encountered in all our studies, in seeking a solution to the problems relative to this region, have no other cause."

I /12/ Which was the truly aboriginal race in Laos? No one can
L say, and at the very most all we can do is to suggest the hypothesis
172 that the first inhabitants must have settled there at a time when present-day Indo-China did not yet exist, geologically speaking, and when a relatively large part of the Asiatic lands was covered by water. The interesting collections obtained in Luang-Prabang by Massie and Lefèvre-Pontalis in the course of their explorations in behalf of the Pavie missions show us instruments and weapons of the Polished Stone Age and the Bronze Age. "There existed, therefore, during this prehistoric epoch in the basin of the northern Mékong, human beings who had the same way of life, the same tools and the same methods of work as our own ancestors in old Gaul" (1). This

1. Cf. L. de Reinach, op. cit. /Le Laos, 1911/

period, however, must have lasted much longer in the peninsula than in Europe, if we are to believe the "Imperial Annals of Annam" according to which bronze was still in use in the second century B.C.

I in northern Indo-China, whose inhabitants were obliged to have re-
L course to /13/ China in order to obtain iron farming implements.
172 According to the discoveries of Indo-Chinese geologists and the learned studies of Dr. Verneau (1), these primitive populations

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1. Cf. R. Verneau, Les récentes découvertes prehistoriques de l'Indochine (comptes rendus de l'Académie des Sciences, 1924). -- H. Mansuy, Contribution à l'étude de la préhistoire de l'Indochine, 1923-1925. -- E. Patte, Notes sur le préhistorique indochinois, 1925.

presented the same characteristics as may still be found "in the islands of Malaysia, from Sumatra to the center of Borneo, among the tribes which constitute the Indonesian group." Today they are known as Kha in Laotian lands, as Moi in Annam and as Pnong in Cambodia. Among these Khas, "There are unquestionably various types. In some of them we recognize without any difficulty the influence of Mongol blood which has modified the characteristics of the primitive race in varying degrees. But if we eliminate these half-breeds who are more or less impregnated with yellow blood, we are left with dolichocephalic, hypsicephalic individuals with pentagonal heads... who closely resemble the old race which once lived on the frontiers of China. It is therefore becoming increasingly probable that the Indonesians and the Khas are both descended from a stock which used to live /14/ in the north of the Indo-Chinese peninsula"(1).

1. R. Verneau, Les crânes humains du gisement préhistorique de Pho-Binh-Gia. -- L'Antropologie, pp. 558-559. Quoted by H. Mansuy in the Mémoires du Service géologique de l'Indochine. Vol. XII, fascicule II, 1925, vi, p. 9.

I From the state of his knowledge on the Indo-Chinese Neolithic
L period in 1925, H. Mansuy has concluded: "These Indonesians
174 form a group of remarkable homogeneity whenever they are not impregnated with the blood of the genuinely Mongoloid races in the midst of which they are disseminated... Through their cranial morphology and their short faces, they are linked to the disharmonic dolichocephalics of the end of the Pleistocene and to the Cro-Magnon type... The real similarity between the men of the last phase of the Pleistocene in Europe and the Indonesian group which

is today scattered throughout the Far East and Malaysia makes it possible to consider this hypothesis. We know that the present-day Indonesians preceded -- both in the southwest of the Asian continent and in Indonesia -- the arrival of populations bearing Mongoloid characteristics, such as the Chinese, Thais, Muongs, Mans, Annamites, Malays, etc., and that wherever these yellow populations have penetrated and settled the Indonesians have been dispossessed of the greater /15/ part of the territories which they originally occupied and have been forced back into remote and inaccessible regions where they still live today. These classical facts, of an ethnic, demographic and geographical order, agree with the results of the first methodical research by prehistoric anthropologists in Southeast Asia."

I L 174 ●

It is therefore to be presumed that the first inhabitants of Laos had only very rudimentary tools and weapons at their disposition, that they lived in complete independence, that their evolution was excessively slow and that they underwent "contact with, the imprint of, and then the yoke of more intelligent and better armed neighbors who had a broader and less individual social organization." Thence arose crossings, metamorphoses, transformations and an intermingling of individuals which subsequently gave birth to intermediate sub-races and to distinct groups the characteristics or even the numbers of which are difficult to determine today, and whose present-day representatives, clinging to the sides of the mountains, "embody before our eyes the traditional type of the savage" with their swarthy skins, their straight noses, their non-slitted eyes, their huts, their arrows and their dialects which are "evidently /16/ related to the Malayo-Polynesian idioms" (1).

1. Cf. E. Chassigneux, Géographie physique, the first chapter of the "Indochine" published in 1929 under the direction of G. Maspero.

I L 172 114

Who, then, were the first invaders? In the absence of any vestiges which can be attributed to a period antedating the beginning of the Christian era, the answer to this question is still more difficult than the question of the first occupants. Formless ruins (or ruins of which it is usually impossible to determine the use, such as the "jars" of Tran-Ninh), crumbling statues and a few fragments of steles buried in the thick undergrowth -- such

I are the sole documents which have so far presented themselves to
L the sagacity of rare seekers who are charmed and disturbed by the
172 very mystery which enveloped them. In vain did the imagination --
114 and sometimes the picturesque imagination -- of a few Frenchmen among the first men who explored the country in the steps of Auguste Pavie, endeavor to use Laotian folklore to establish a kind of chronological classification of the races which successively populated the basin of the Mékong before the formation of the historically reconstructed political groupings. We cannot, without the risk of grave error, follow them in /17/ their hazardous hypotheses, the complete fragility of which has been demonstrated by the subsequent work of more expert historians (1).

I 1. Here nevertheless, as a curiosity, is the summary of the
L hypothesis formed by Dr. Lefèvre in the stimulating Ap-
● 174 pendix to his Voyage au Laos (Paris, Plon, 1898):
114 1. The first inhabitants of the peninsula, and the true aboriginals, were the Khas, an almost savage people without monuments and, so to speak, without any writing, who were driven back into the mountains by the successive invaders of their territory;

2. The Malays or Chams were the first colonists to come to Indo-China. They gradually succeeded in forming several principalities, the most important of which was the kingdom of Champa, comprising the whole coast from Tourane to Baria. A second Cham kingdom was founded in the basin of the Nam-Moun about 543 B.C.;

3. A century later there arrived 12,000 Brahmans coming from Benares with their leader Pra-Tong, the son of a king of Delhi. They struggled with the Chams, who were driven out of the basin of the Nam-Moun and came and founded the kingdom of Champassac (Bassac) whose capital was... Ventiane! (sic, p. 285). The Brahmans were the first ancestors of the Cambodians. They organized the conquered territory on the Hindu system and gave it the name of Krung (kingdom) Inthapat (of Indra). They founded Inthapataboury, the capital, to the south of the Dangrek, Saniaboury (Xania, victory; boury, city), Sakon-Lakon (Salaka, peace), Batanaboury (precious stones) and Souvanapoum (city of gold);

4. Under Açoka, emperor of "Burma" /"Birmanie"/

(sic, pp. 287 and 298; Dr. Lefevre does not seem to be aware of the fact that the emperor Açoka was one of the greatest sovereigns of Indian history), took place the arrival of the Kmers coming from Pegou and Hangsavadi, who settled in Cambodia and thus lessened the cast of Brahmans; I L 174 114

5. But the Tartars swept down from the north and leveled everything. They were followed by the Thaïs who came from Mongolia or Séchouen and spread to Siam, Laos, Burma, etc.;

6. To the east along the coast were the Annamites who came from Kouei-Tcheou and occupied all of the land between the Annamitic Chain and the sea.

/18/ Given the present state of our knowledge we may only suppose that "hardy navigators" (?) coming from the Malay Archipelago occupied the Indo-Chinese coasts several centuries before our era. They must have settled first on the thin strip of land between the Annamitic Chain and the sea, where they must subsequently have formed the powerful kingdom of Champa. Then they ventured into the basin of the Mékong and went up the river at least as far as the point where it is joined by the Nam-Moun, where they entered into conflict with the Khas. They were stronger, more intelligent and better organized, and drove these aboriginals back into the forests and mountains. They were then solidly established until the day when they encountered other men coming down from the northern regions, doubtless the Kmers or Cambodians (or their ancestors) who drove them back in their turn or absorbed them. The Chams and Kmers were strongly Hinduized, either because they were already Sivaites when they arrived in the country or because apostles of Buddhism later came to preach their faith /19/ and disseminate Indian culture in the southwest of the peninsula (1).

1. This theory of the "prehistoric" Chams, developed by E. Aymonier in his important work on Cambodia, has been strongly opposed by P. Pelliot who objects that no text has so far confirmed "any vague native traditions." -- Cf. "Deux itinéraires de Chine en Indes" (Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 1904, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2.)-- See, however, G. Ferrand who also believes that the Indianization of Cambodia and Champa must have begun

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about the fourth century B. C. Cf. Le Kouen-louen et les anciennes navigations, 1919, and L. Finot, Les origines de la colonisation indienne en Indo-chine.

At the same time, "large junks carrying hundreds of men (from the northeast) could, we must presume, have introduced certain industries into Indo-China. . . then, starting in the third century B. C., the Tsins who were the real founders of Chinese power and had given the empire its practically final limits, began to think of a sort of universal domination and gave to their relations, which had become more active, a character of conquest and study of neighboring countries. . . " (2).

2. Cf. ibid. Contested by P. Pelliot who, in the same study, claims that "the great migrations of men from the north in centuries which antedate our era belong to fiction and not to history."

Thus in this remote epoch there was foreshadowed a division of the peninsula into two zones of /20/ civilization, such as we have already observed in the Indo-China of today: the Chinese zone which will extend over the Annamite territory (which ten centuries of submission will profoundly "sinify"); and the Indian zone which will include Champa and Cambodia with its future extensions into the basins of the Mékong and the Ménam.

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/21/ CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL PERIOD. -- THE BEGINNINGS

The Annals of the various Laotian kingdoms of the Mékong basin, supported by precise written evidence, mention events which did not begin until just before the fourteenth century of our era. For the earlier period we have only a rather small number of traditions and local legends. Thus in order to establish certain historical facts and try to show the connection between them, we must have recourse to the chronicles of neighboring lands which are all too often obscure and fabulous themselves. A great many hypotheses on this, so to speak, medieval epoch have been formulated, all of which are both possible and questionable. It is by trying to classify them and by taking inspiration from those which seem to be the most likely that the following guiding points have been established:

It is generally admitted that towards the beginning of our era I
the geographical distribution of the /22/ /C. A. M. Translator's L
note. Page 22 is entirely devoted to a map: "The Indo-Chinese 162
Peninsula in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries."/ /23/ 174
various populations which inhabited Indo-China was approximately as follows:

The Chams inhabited southern Annam;

The Kmers occupied not only the present-day Cambodian region, but probably also present-day Cochinchina and the greater part of Laos;

The Burmese, in conjunction with their Tibetan congeners, were doubtless already established along the Upper Irrawaddy, and the Pégouans (Mon or Talain, related to the Kmers) in the lower valley of this river;

The Thaïs, who came from central Asia and were divided into six native principalities or "tchao," occupied Yunnan;

Finally, the Annamites occupied the north of Annam and Tonkin, which were organized as a Chinese province (1).

1. Cf. R. Grousset, Histoire de l'Extrême-Orient, pp. 285, 287, 548 and 549. "The study of phonetics has led H. Maspero to find that Annamite is related to the Thaï /197/ family." (Ibid., p. 599.)

Thaïs of the Mékong The genesis of Thaï settlement in the 174
valley of the Mékong is infinitely more obscure. There is a com- 773
plete lack of documentary evidence if we overlook the Laotian legends which are indeed charming in their animation and naïveté but which do not offer any guarantee of authenticity or even, in most cases, of probability (2). We must nevertheless admit that

2. Cf. Mission Pavie, Études diverses, Vol. II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam" (manuscripts translated by Auguste Pavie's Cambodians).

the wonderful tales of Muong-Theng's gourd and of the division of the earth between the sons of Khoun-Borom do not contradict our notions as to the expansion of the Thaï race in Indo-China, and that they constitute an obvious allusion to the arrival of the invaders in eastern Laos.

Here is the legend, of which there are several versions, in as 539
"denuded" and condensed a form as possible (3): 174
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3. This legend of the gourds very probably takes its inspiration from the passage in the Ramayana which tells how "Loumati, the second wife of Sagara, gave birth to a green calabash. It broke, and sixty thousand sons came out of it. The nurses put this 'little' family out to grow in a bed of butter." (Ibid., Introduction, p. xxxvii.)

/31/ The king of Heaven Phya-Theng sent the sage Khoun-Borom to reign on earth with two divine wives, Nang-Et-Keng and Nang-Yoma-kara. Mounted on a white elephant with black ears and tusks which were curved, transparent and crossed, Khoun-Borom came down to the vast plateau of Muong-Theng (the land of angels, known today by the Annamite name Dien-Bien-Phu) in the spot called Na-Noï. There a gourd plant of prodigious dimensions had grown in the center of Kouva pond and had fastened onto a fig tree on the bank which was itself of unrivaled size and which helped the plant to support two enormous fruits. The celestial envoy had the gourds pierced, and out of them, in incalculable quantities, there at once came gold, silver, cloth, perfume, plant seeds, men, women, oxen, buffalo, pigs, dogs, chickens, ducks, etc., which spread throughout the world. And since his two wives had given him seven sons, Khoun-Borom

539 separated the peoples and divided them among his sons:
174 1. Khoun-Lo received Muong-Swa, the land of millions of ele-
773 phants and of white parasols (Lan-Xang-Hom-Khao);

2. Chet-Chuong received Muong-Phoueun (plateau of Tran-Ninh and valley of the Nam-Nhiep as far as the vicinity of Borikane);

/32/ 3. Nhi-Fa-Lane received Muong-Ho (Sip-Song-Panas, the land of the Twelve Thousand Ricefields);

4. Chu-Song received Prakan (the Thai regions of Upper Tonkin and of the Black River);

5. Saya-Phong received Muong-Nioun (Xieng-Mai or Lan-Na, the land of millions of ricefields);

6. Kham-In received Muong-Louvo (Siam or Lan-Piyea, the land of millions of granaries);

7. Louk-Poun, finally, received Hongsavadi (Pegou and Pagan).

Before sending them forth Khoun-Borom said to the seven kings who were his children: "You shall live peacefully and as good neighbors, the elder ones not quarreling with their younger brothers... Go forth, and remember that you were born of the same womb."

174 It is not impossible that this division, in spite of its fabulous
631 character, should mark the first stage of the history of the Thaïs in the Mékong valley, at a time which the legend does not indicate but which might belong to the second half of the thirteenth century. This date would indeed correspond approximately to an inscription of Rama-Khameng, king of Sukhothaï, "written in Cambodian characters on the four sides of a sandstone stele" and translated by Father Schmitt, in which are mentioned for the first time the names of Vientiane and Vien-Kham (Tran-Ninh) in /33/ the basin of the "Khong river" (1). But whereas the Thaïs of the Ménam had succeeded, in the course of relatively brief stages, in forming a compact Siamese kingdom which was rapidly freed from Kmer domination, the Thaïs of the Mékong remained divided for a much longer time.

1. Cf. Mission Pavie, ibid. /Études diverses, Vol II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam" (manuscripts translated by Auguste Pavie's Cambodians)/, pp. 175ff., and G. Maspero, "Le Royaume de Vieng-Chan" (Revue indochinoise, 1904, pp. 497 and 498).

Having probably come from their land of origin through the secondary valleys of the Nam-Ta, the Nam Ou and the Nam-Ngun, they founded more or less rival principalities: Cri Cudhamánagari (Muong-Swa-Luang-Prabang); Muong Phoueun (Xieng-Kham, later

Xieng-Khouang) and Candanapuri (Sayfong-Vientiane). At first all these had to recognize the suzerainty of Angkor (2), then 174 631

2. Cf. G. Maspero, Ibid., and "Sayfong, une ville morte" (Bulletin de l'E.F.E.O., Vol. III, No. 1, January-March 1903).

they were conquered by the king of Sukhothai, as is revealed to us precisely by the inscription of Rama-Khameng.

This lack of unity between the principalities is to be explained in large part by the geographical configuration of the country. The many level stretches of the Mékong, "separated by rapids which were difficult to negotiate" and by this very fact "almost /34/ foreign to one another" (1), placed serious obstacles 174 631 133

1. Cf. G. Maspero, ibid. (Moeurs et coutumes de l'ancien Laos, p. 225.)

in the way of any political fusion of groups which were nevertheless of the same race and the same language and whose frontiers touched one another. It required all the energy of Fa-Ngoun "the Conqueror," the prince of Muong-Swa, to achieve Laotian unity in the following century after many campaigns, and even then chiefs of provinces (muong) continued to govern their fiefs in a spirit of independence which unceasingly impelled them to shake off the yoke of the sovereign. This vestige of feudalism was to remain, in the last analysis, the dominant characteristic of the whole history of these principalities which were shut off from one another in a natural isolation which favored the persistence of local authorities

/35/ CHAPTER IV
THE KINGDOM OF LAN-XANG (1353-1707)

Previous to 1315 A.D., the date of birth of Fa-Ngoun, the tradition of Muong-Swa has preserved only a long list of names of native chieftains which unrolls into a tortuous labyrinth where Ariadne's thread is often broken. From the fables contained in the manuscripts on latania leaves which Auguste Pavie searched through meticulously during his first stay in Paklay, it is possible 175

gilt and jewels. The wily merchants accepted all these kindnesses 439
in the hope of extracting great profits from their packet (1). 175*

1. Cf. Cabaton, op. cit. /Le Laos et les Neerlandais au dix-septieme siecle (1913). /

The audience took place near the pyramid of That-Luong which was entirely covered with gold plate. The king, surrounded by all his court, stood in a great temple and had the newcomers sit on mats under the gallery. The following day danses, combats and /574/
water jousts were given in their honor on the river bank. Souligna-Vongsa was present, carried on a golden chair, and came and sat on a /108/ balcony erected over the river. In the evening more than two hundred fiery pirogues went down the Mekong. "The river seemed to be on fire."

As time passed the merchandise sold well, thanks to the gifts distributed to the king, the princes, the princesses and the officers. The Dutch cleverly disparaged the Siamese of Ayuthya as traders of little faith, offered to settle a misunderstanding which had arisen between the sovereigns of Lan-Xang and Cambodia, and obtained the Laotians' promise to deliver them enormous quantities of benzoin and gum lac. They finally left on December 24, "profoundly impressed with the wealth and splendor" of the kingdom of Vientiane (1).

1. Van Wusthof left without his two assistants, whom he left with the king to await the gifts destined for Van Diemen and the Laotian "ambassador" who was to accompany them. (Francis Garnier, Bulletin de la Societe de geographie, 1871.)

If we are to believe Van Wusthof, this city then had a huge 174
population, while Luang-Prabang was nothing more than a deserted 164
city. A terrible cholera epidemic had decimated its population, 369
and those who were left had come to life in Vientiane.

He also confirms the kingdom's frontiers as stated by the Annals and the perfect relations which /109/ Lan-Xang maintained with all its neighbors.

On the other hand he does not shed any light -- rather the con- 439
trary -- on the obscure period which preceded Souligna's accession 643*
to the throne. Indeed he writes with perfect serenity: "the present 175*
king inherited the crown three years ago from his brother, who died

la Sainte-Chapelle, a la seconde boutique, a l'enseigne 175*
du Voyageur. 114
/127/

naivete, the work /111/ does not have the ring of sincerity which constitutes the merit of the Dutch account. It was probably written from the reminiscences of Father J. M. Leria (1) and is of value

1. Father Giovanni-Maria Leria, a Piedmontese Jesuit, left Cambodia in April 1642 accompanied by some Cochinchinese neophytes with a caravan of Laotian traders who were returning to their country. He remained in Laos for five years "despite the opposition and the intrigues of the bonzes" and did not leave Vientiane until December 2, 1647. (Cf. Fr. Garnier, 1871, and Father Alex. de Rhodes, 1651.)

only as a document at second hand. It will nevertheless be of some interest to extract the following passages:

"In the East it (the kingdom of the 'Langiens') has the kingdom 131
of Tonkin which stretches to the southwest towards Cochinchina, 175*
and further to the South that of Cambodia; in the southwest and the west the kingdom of Pegou; and in the north that of Ava and the province called U or Lu (2), and still further again to the north as

2. See below, p. 176, note 1.

far as the frontiers which limit it in this direction, where there are certain peoples who are called Gnai. . . .

"Because of its fertility and because the things necessary to life 421
are found there in abundance, the kingdom is so heavily populated 433
that only a little while ago in the census which was taken of per- 161
sons who were /112/ judged fit to serve the king at war and to bear arms, 500,000 were counted, not including the old people who are so numerous and so rubust that even of those who are a hundred years old a very large army might be formed for the defense of the kingdom if the need should arise. . .

"The chief city and the one in which the king ordinarily stays 633
is situated in the middle of the kingdom, eighteen degrees toward 174
our Arctic pole, and is called Langione. It has good moats and 414
extremely high walls on one side, and on the other the great river to defend it against the undertakings of enemies. . . . The royal palace, the structure and symmetry of which are admirable, can

633 be seen from a great distance. To be sure, it extends over a prodigi-
174 ous area and is so large that one would take it for a city... The king's
344 apartments, which are embellished with a superb and magnificent portico and a large number of beautiful rooms accompanied by a large parlor, are all made of wood which will not decay and ornamented inside and outside with excellent bas-reliefs so delicately gilded that they seem rather to be covered with flakes of gold than gold leaf.

"From that point one enters the courtyards which are extremely spacious, and one first sees a long line of houses built entirely of brick and roofed /113/ with tile in which the second wives usually stay, and outside another row of houses built alongside in the same symmetry for the mandarins' officers. I could write a whole volume if I undertook a minute description of all the other parts of the palace, the riches, the departments, the gardens and a number of other such things...

565 "The houses of the principal lords and of well-to-do persons are
342 very high and beautiful, and are all made of wood with a great deal
352 of artifice and a greater or lesser number of ornaments, depending on the expense to which the individuals are willing to go, but I must confess that the common people and the poor are housed extremely badly
/793/ and that their dwellings are cabins and huts rather than houses. Only the talapoins (bonzes), who are the priests of the idols, have permission to build their monasteries and houses out of brick and stone. Instead of rugs and other such furnishings, persons of quality use small reed mats in which the weave is so delicate and so highly ornamented with figures and various leaf patterns that, to my mind, there is nothing more beautiful nor more pleasing to the eye. They ordinarily use them to cover the walls of /114/ their rooms and houses inside and outside, which they keep very clean and of which they take particular care...

643* "The king is absolute and independent... all the land belongs to
/423/ him, and he disposes as absolute lord of all that his subjects possess...
631 offices, employment, honors and wealth depend absolutely on the
174 king, who raises those persons who please him most to the highest offices in the kingdom.... The principal dignities and offices of the kingdom are eight in number. The first is that of viceroy general... and because the kingdom is divided into seven provinces seven other viceroys are appointed... there are also other governments of less consequence which depend on the former both in respect to civil affairs and to those which concern war.... Each of these provinces has
/701/ its militia, which consists of infantry and cavalry.

"But in regard to the kingdom's laws, it is a certain fact that 671
there are very few of them, because, in my opinion, there is no 571
great need of any in order to live in accordance with the customs 626
of the land. The people are brought up to work, to have very little to do with foreigners, not to undertake anything which might disturb them and to live an idle and /115/ listless life although not lacking any of the things necessary to preserve it. The king's will, which does not greatly interfere with his people, takes the place of a great many laws for them.... The manner in which the inhabitants of the land live with one another is highly civil and obliging. Unfriendliness and quarrels are banished... they all have enough to live on and get along on, so that one does not hear of thieves except as a thing quite out of the ordinary.... But the /565/
mandarins do not behave in the same way. Indeed, their insolence and their insulting and criminal conduct dim the praise which the common people merit on this account, because they abuse the power which they have in the kingdom, and when they see something which pleases them... they act in such wise as to find means for taking possession of it.

"But if we should now pass to the person of the king in order to 643*
describe him, there is no monarch, no matter how powerful, whom 174
he does not regard as beneath him, and it would indeed seem that 648
he affects not to yield in any particular to the emperors of China... Only rarely does he appear in public... preferring to be worshiped by his people as a hidden God rather than as a man like themselves and of the same nature... He allows himself to be seen only twice /116/ a year, for a period of three days, by his people, who receive this grace from their prince with such gratitude and joyous sentiments that he forgets nothing on these occasions which might contribute to their amusement. For this purpose there are several /527/
elephants which are trained to do a thousand little tricks and several wild animals which are kept chained and made to fight... finally there are wrestlers and gladiators and others, with their skirmishes which last until last until evening and terminate all this rejoicing...

"Of all the prerogatives which he (the king) has, and which are 643*
a further mark of the extent of his power, that of having several 576
petty tributary kings in his dependency who come to his court to do him homage and acknowledge him as their sovereign and who give him superb presents, is by no means the least. He receives these ambassadors in a great parlor seated on an extremely high throne and garbed in his ceremonial robes, and replies to their civilities

648* 643* 175* Ong-Hue cared only about receiving his tribute, and therefore straightway abandoned his protege, whose life and liberty Ong-Lo had spared, and received his "vassal" with all the regard due to his rank.

Severance of Bassac. His authority does not seem to have gained any greater acceptance in the southern provinces, if we dare refer to the unconnected and improbably manuscripts which constitute what have come to be called the Annals of Bassac. The prince who /147/ governed this latter country from 1713 to 1747, Chao-Soi-Sisamout by name, clearly seems to have turned to Siam and Cambodia, while Ong-Hue was powerless to expose himself in his turn to the risks which Setthathirath had once run in a hazardous and distant expedition. He had to bow helplessly before this new consequence of the schism in order to concentrate all his attention on Luang-Prabang, where his cousins King-Kitsarath, Intha-Som and Khamone-Noi were agitating "for the crown" (1). He died around 1735 without having

1. See below, "Luang-Prabang," p. 179 ff.

had a chance to intervene in the affairs of the dissenting principality (2).

127 174 2. Since the chronicles of Vientiane were completely destroyed when the city was sacked in 1828, the events which marked the last century of the kingdom's existence are known only through the Annals of the neighboring States. The country, emptied of its inhabitants, has preserved no oral tradition and no exact memory of this period of decadence. The result is that no claim for rigorous exactitude can be made even for the dates of the different reigns which are indicated in the course of the present study. Most of them were arrived at by trial and error and are given with reservations.

ONG-LONG, KING 1735-1760.

643* 648* 175* His son Ong-Long succeeded him. The first years of his reign do not seem to have been troubled by the age-old struggle between the /148/ Burmese and the Pegouans, which had nevertheless flared up suddenly and threatened to overflow into the neighboring States.

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It is true that all the races and varieties enumerated above can be found in Laos, but it is impossible to say what their exact origins were or to gain a complete knowledge of their history, their migrations and the details of their settlement in the land.

For certain regions inhabited by several races we do possess, however, either Phong Savadan or local annals, or else legends written on palm leaves, or even accounts which have been handed down by word of mouth. The manuscripts are, in general, rather incorrect and full of interpolations and embellishments inevitably due to the scribes. They are the only written documents.

The architecture might also give us useful information on all these questions, but the monuments are either too recent and contain nothing of any interest or else they are mute on the events which motivated their edification, as well as on the events contemporaneous with them. None of this evidence, whether it be in the form of manuscripts, temples or pagodas, offers the guarantees of authenticity and the ensemble of precise details which are needed in order to leave the realm of hypotheses and [129] [Illustration] [130] [Blank page] [131] deductions, no matter how adroit and logical these may be, when we attempt to settle in exact fashion the evolution of races in the basin of the Great River.

Various theories, based on documents which are questionable in varying degrees, have been put forth by explorers and travelers. We shall here submit to the reader's judgment those which seem to afford the best summary of this somewhat obscure question.

Here, first, is the opinion of the Superior Resident in Laos (1).

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(1) Le Laos Français. (Revue indo-chinoise, Nos. 82 ff., 1900.)

"Laotian legends claim that all the races which now inhabit Indo-China came out of one and the same gourd in Dien-Bien-Phu (Annamite style) or Muong-Thèng (Laotian style), a vast plateau situated in the northeast part of the valley of the Nam-Hou. The sons of this gourd are said to have spread eastward towards the China Sea, southward along the Mékong and the Ménam, and westward towards Burma. Whether we will or not, this gourd reminds us of Noah's Ark.

"On the other hand, if we consult the chronological list of the kings of Luang-Prabang, we note that after six kings of foreign origin, the first of which came from India and the second from Cambodia, there were four kings of Kha race, after which Laotians coming from

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Dien-Bien assumed power and never again relinquished it.

"In the absence of local documents offering sufficient guaranties of authenticity, we can only formulate hypotheses on the evolution of races in the Mékong valley, by using the better known history of the East Indies and the Empire of Annam.

"In the present hypothesis we shall assume that the autochthonous population in prehistoric times was a highly colored race of which no traces are left, but whose presence can alone explain, here as in the East Indies or in Annam, the quite marked coloration of the present-day population despite repeated infusions of yellow and white blood.

"By virtue of its location the valley of the Mékong was destined to be one of the major outlets of the races coming from Tibet, and one of the entries for the red races which came up the rivers from the south.

"By virtue of their location, too, the basins of the Mekong and the Ménam, separated from one another by dividing chains low in altitude, were destined to be the refuge of races driven from the east and west by victorious invaders. We know that the first invaders of India were Tibetans. It is probable that a similar invasion took place in the basin of the Mékong and brought about a first mixture between the pseudo-negroes whom we have supposed to have been the original inhabitants and the invaders.

[132] "Later on the Touranians who had penetrated into the Indies (1) from the west and who left so strong an imprint of their

(1) And also into Yunnan and Malaysia, where they introduced Islamism. (Author's note.)

type in the land must have gone back eastwards in considerable numbers when they were driven out by the Aryans, and founded an ephemeral dynasty in Laos.

"Meanwhile the Malays who had occupied the Indo-Chinese coastline went up the Mékong and came, in their turn, to mix with the races already in the land. They do not seem, however, to have gone beyond Savannakhèt, for the northernmost Cham monument of which we know is that of Hueun-Hin (the stone house) which is to be found somewhat north of the mouth of the Sé-Bang-Hien.

"It is possible that the mixture of aborigines, Tibetans, Touranians and Malays produced the race of Khas with its many varieties which are slightly different depending on the dominant blood type.

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"When the Annamites, who were of Chinese origin, succeeded, although not without difficulty, in destroying the Cham empire, they drove the conquered people back into the Mékong basin where a kingdom grew up which had Bassac as its capital and was known by the name of Champa-Sak by the Laotians. It was then that the Thais, driving the Khas and the Chams whom they could not absorb or who resisted them back towards the mountains, took possession of all the plains and all the valleys. From this last mixture, on top of so many others, there has resulted quite a large number of varieties which have a common origin and have had a parallel development and life, but which have not mixed with neighboring varieties. The generic name of Thais which is given to this collection of men implies a certain number of types which, if not different, are at least dissimilar in certain respects. Finally, there were two rather inconsiderable infusions of Aryan blood. The first occurred in the fifth century A.D. and went northward from Cambodia as far as Luang-Prabang. The second was in the seventh century, when the sacred books were brought from India through Burma and the north Mékong valley. A curious fact worthy of note is that the Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hiang and Huyen-Tchang, returning from the Indies where they had gone to study the Buddhist religion, wrote their well known works in China at about the same time. The influence of the Aryans, who were the bearers of the sacred books of Buddhist doctrine and also of many Brahminic superstitions, manifested itself especially in a physical way among the Thais of the northwest and less noticeably among the Thais on the very banks of the Mékong.

"Although the Aryans scarcely transformed or modified a small segment of the Thais from the physical point of view, without having any influence of this type on the rest, it may nevertheless easily be asserted that the moral influence which they exerted was felt by all the Thais and that all of them had their moral and intellectual life [123] modified by the Aryans to an appreciable degree. Only the Khas escaped this influence."

Finally, in conclusion, this author adds:

"The population of Laos can be naturally divided into three broad categories:

"1. The Thais, who include all the people speaking the Thai language with slight differences in accent and a few differences in vocabulary. The chief among them are:

"The Laotians, the Phou-Thais, the white, black and red Thais,

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the Thais-Neua, the Pou-Euns, the Lus and the Youns;

"2. The Khas, and the Khas who are evolving towards types of the first category;

"3. The inhabitants who come from neighboring countries: China, Yunnan, Annam, Cambodia, Siam, Burma."

We shall now give Dr. Lefèvre's version (1):

(1) Dr. Lefèvre, Un voyage au Laos, 1898.

"1. The first inhabitants of the peninsula or true aborigines were the Khas, a nearly savage fold without monuments and, so to speak, without any form of writing, who were driven back into the mountains by the successive invaders of their territory.

"2. The Malays or Chams were the first colonists to come to Indo-China. Little by little they succeeded in forming several principalities, the most important of which was the kingdom of Champa or Tiampa, which included the whole coast from Tourane to Baria.

"3. After the Malay infiltration came the arrival of the Brahmins, who had been driven out of Benares with their leader Pra-Thong. They struggled with the Malays and almost absorbed them in the end. The Brahmins were the first ancestors of the Cambodians.

"4. Under Açoka, emperor of Burma, took place the arrival of the Kmers who came from Pégou and Hansavadi and settled in Cambodia, thereby overshadowing the Brahmin caste.

"5. Tartars came down from the north and leveled all. They were followed by the Thais who came from Mongolia or Setchuen and who spread to Siam, Laos, Burma, Kouang-Si, Kouang-Toung, the north of Tonkin and the island of Haïnan.

"6. To the east, on the coast, are the Annamites, who came from Kouei-Tcheou and occupy all the territory included between the Annamitic Chain and the sea."

Dr. Lefèvre's conclusions are worthy of note, for they were based on documents which are reputed to be authentic. We [134] should, however, add one particular relating to the prehistoric period, that is to say to the epoch of polished stone and the bronze age. At that time there were human beings in the Mékong basin who had the same way of life, the same kind of tools and the same methods of work as our own ancestors in ancient Gaul. In fact, the interesting

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172 collections which have been assembled in Luang-Prabang by M. Massie (1) and by Prince Henri d'Orléans contain tools and weapons

(1) The Massie collection (Pavie mission) is in the museum of Saint-Germain.

of polished stone and bronze which attest the antiquity of the Khas or Laotian aborigines.

174 The autochthonous races, the first occupants of the soil of Indo-China, the ancestors of the folk whom we now call Khas, possessed
563 means of action which were doubtless identical to those of the neighboring peoples (2). But their evolution towards the grouping of

(2) See Appendix, No. XVII.

families into tribes and of tribes into clans was a great deal slower. Their tools and weapons remained at a fixed stage of development, and thus they were subjected to contact with and then the influence and yoke of more intelligent neighbors who were better armed and had a broader and less individualistic social organization.

Who can say, in the absence of any kind of historical monument relating to this remote epoch, and especially after the terrible Tartar invasion, how many crossings, metamorphoses and fundamental transformations these first inhabitants of Laos underwent? Always driven back, fleeing and scattered, they formed what might be called ethnic stratifications which were broken from place to place by numerous faults but the traces of which are clearly visible at the various levels of the mountain slopes and on the plateaus where Kha villages were successively established.

Disseminated, with no bond to unite them, dispersed so as to offer less resistance, speaking different dialects, and deprived of common interests, it may be truly said that the various Kha tribes and clans appear to us in a degenerate light.

000 It would, however, be wrong to suppose that this state of affairs is immutable and incurable. The physical and moral regeneration [135] of these races must not be thought of as a utopian dream, but is essential both as an instrument of domination and as a stimulus to our other subjects in Laos who are descended from the conquering races.

It will be greatly to our interest, and we may even say that it

197 In résumé, the study of the Thai language and its derivatives is an attractive one. The language is gentle, musical and euphonic, and is easy for us as well as for the other Latin peoples to pronounce.

It is considered to have many analogies with Malay and most of the Polynesian idioms.

Siamese, Youn and Lu have become localized in certain parts of Laos or have been set aside for special uses. Thus Youn, as we have seen, is the sacred language of Laos.

Lao, however, or the Laotian form of the Thai language, is quite widespread.

[146] In fact, outside of Laos this language is still spoken in Yunnan, in Tonkin, in the two Kouangs and, it would seem, as far away as Hainan.

4. RELIGIONS

174 771 In prehistoric times Laos must have been in the same situation as the other parts of the world, from the moral and religious point of view. [Illustration here.]

In the age of polished stone, as in the bronze age, there were probably great similarities between the Orient and the Occident with respect to tools and weapons, and also with respect to speculative, religious and philosophical ideas.

175 771 This state of affairs continued for many centuries until the time when, with the first peaceful migrations from the north and northwest, Vedic precepts and a knowledge of the laws of Manou--laws which were moral, social and above all physiological--began to infiltrate the region. Later on, between 900 and 700 B.C., more militant invaders brought in the already age-old dogmas of Brahminism, together with ancestor worship and many superstitions.

Finally, after another period of fifteen to thirteen centuries, Buddhism made its appearance in Indo-China by two different routes, the south and the northwest.

771 These various doctrines were transformed as time passed and underwent additions, diminutions and numerous changes both in form and content. Struggles, invasions and migrations and civil wars profoundly modified races and made their impression on minds, always leaving ineradicable traces on body and spirit.

It is because of these constant upheavals that we note in Laos today a great host of dogmas and practices which range all the way

149: Reinach--400 G-3 (no date) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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APPENDIX XVII
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLES OF LAOS

I

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Which was the truly autochthonous race, whence did it come, and what were its mores and customs? No one can answer this question, and the only statement which can be advanced is that the savage peoples must have settled in the Indo-Chinese peninsula at a time when present-day Indo-China did not yet exist, geologically speaking, and when a greater or lesser part of the Asiatic continent was covered by water.

Coming from the Malay Archipelago, the Khas occupied the south of the peninsula at first and immediately entered into a struggle with the aborigines. Stronger and more intelligent, they drove the aborigines back into the forests and mountains and founded groups and colonies in their midst which gradually absorbed the first occupants, until that day when the victorious Khas came up against men of the yellow race who drove them back into the mountains in their turn, and into the poorest and most remote parts of the land.

Coming down from the high plateaus of central Asia, probably from Tibet, the men of yellow race came in through the northwest and at first occupied the northern provinces of the immense territory which was later to make up the Chinese empire. These natives, whom the Chinese chroniclers designate by the name of Y, that is to say "Bearers of large bows," and by the name of "Miao-Tse," or "Sons of the uncultivated fields," were driven back in their turn by new invaders. They then fell back into the southern provinces and sought refuge on little-accessible peaks where more or less pure types of their ancient race may still be found today, and from there they spread into the valleys of the Mekong, the Menam, the Salouen and the Irrawaddy. Isolated from one another as a consequence of their expansion, these individuals of primitive race became mixed with one another and with the first inhabitants of the conquered regions, and gave birth to intermediary sub-races and to distinct groups whose character and even number is very difficult to determine. Language became [103] differentiated, the kind of handwriting used was influenced by the proximity of more powerful peoples, dress changed, and yet all of them preserved analogous usages and beliefs which militate in favor of a common origin. Thence arises the necessity of seeking the origin of these peoples in the diversity of families, tribes, sub-races and races which successively shared the extreme provinces of present-day China and Indo-China (1)

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D.E. PRANOV, LE LAOS français (COLLECTION AMEL, [PARI

China and Indo-China (1).

[113] (1) E. Picanon, Le Laos français. 1901, Challamel. [Paris.]

II

173 Laos, Thais and Khas. Although the Laotian legends
563 attribute the same origin to all of these (Mueng-Theng or Dien-Bien-
144 Phu) and say that they all came from the same "gourd" (Nam-Tao-Phour), it is hardly likely that the Laotians and the Khas have a common origin. Indeed, the characteristics which serve to distinguish the two races are too numerous and too marked, both from the point of view of the racial types themselves and as regards language, mores and religious beliefs.

144 Nor can it be affirmed that the Khas are the representatives of
174 the aboriginal population, for before any of their people had mounted the throne of Luang-Prabang, six kings foreign to their race had already occupied it--if we may regard the list of the first kings of the land which is preserved in the Phong-Sa Va-Dan (annals of the kingdom) as correct--and of these conquering princes the first is said to have come from India, and the second from Cambodia.

In any case, the Khas are said to have preceded the Laotians in the land, and it was not until the reign of their fourth and last king that they are supposed to have been conquered and driven out or enslaved by the Laotians, who had come down from Dien-Bien-
[609] Phu. Since that time, and despite many revolts of which the last is almost recent, the Khas have never ceased being "a folk talliable and liable to forced labor at pleasure" for their vanquishers, and their name has become a synonym for a low person or slave in the current
[561] idiom. Not until 1895 were the Khas once and for all freed--freed is perhaps not the word, for in the strict sense they were never slaves--or at least summoned to enjoy a system of rule similar to that of the other natives and which left no margin for arbitrariness and vexations.

173 In designating Dien-Bien-Phu as the cradle of the Laotian people, or at least in attributing to the Laotians and the Thais a common origin, legend seems to be in agreement with reality. There are indeed many points of resemblance and contact between the two peoples. The type is invariably the same, although finer in the native of Luang-
175 Prabang than in the native of Lai-Chau or Dien-Bien-Phu. Not more
291 than two hundred years ago the Laotians still wore, like the black
177 Thais, the Annamite costume and their hair wound in a coil. It was doubtless after contact with the Siamese--who had themselves

172 A considerable agglomeration of human remains was found in the neighborhood of the burial places. One can state with certainty that the area of the Jars, with innumerable funereal monoliths accompanied by rich furnishings, was the center of a social organization which was [11] well constructed with a well-organized hierarchy. That the food for so many people necessitated a large amount of agriculture cannot be disputed. Without doubt, cereals were then cultivated in this region. The peasants were also breeders, for a quasi-sedentary army of men cannot be fed by the products of hunting. As for fishing, it is out of the question due to the hydrography of the country. The funereal furnishings are those of a people who live from working the land. Besides, the present-day peasants of the region of Ban-Ang or of the former aerodrome of Lat-Sen often dig up scattered prehistoric pieces in greater or lesser quantity. Judging from the iron implements unearthed, it can be said that there were two modes of life at the time of the builders of monoliths: that of the mountain people of the forests, who lived in the manner of the present-day Khas and Meos, using the rai method of agriculture; and that of the plains people, assembled from the plain of the Jars, who had cleared the land and cultivated it perhaps by ploughing.

These inhabitants had intercourse with the outside. The two fragments of road which go from this central plain, the one towards Luang Prabang, the other towards Borikan, are strewn at intervals and along the mountain passes with small fields of urns or simply with cemeteries of funeral stones. These routes must have been traveled by caravans of salt merchants. One must not lose sight of the fact that the principal economic activity of prehistoric times was the commerce in this product, and we remind the reader that the whole country east of Tran-Ninh is very rich in rock-salt.

174 To summarize, judging from their workmanship, the megaliths already belong to the age of metals, that is to say, to the protohistoric epoch. But whether they are menhirs or monolithic urns, [12] one is in the presence of monuments of funereal purpose, related to the cult of dead ancestors and chiefs.

Again we are faced with an obscure abyss. How many links are missing in this chain of events! However, a dim ray of light is shed on the dawn of the historical period by linguistics, thanks to the study of the onomastic doublets of the ancient name of Luang Prabang: Xieng-T'ong, Xieng-Dong. One is led to admit the existence of exogamic human groups (doubtless Indonesians) most likely attached,

from the linguistic point of view to the Mon-Khmer group, possessing a two-class social system (Lévy). But one must reach the seventh century of the Christian era to arrive at the solid ground of historic realities.

HISTORIC PERIOD. THE KHMER INFLUENCE

Just as the countries of the Far East received in their early stages of development the imprint of foreign civilizations--all are aware of their debt to the Graeco-Roman civilization which each one has known how to adapt to its particular genius--so in the same manner Laos has benefited in the beginning from the neighboring civilizations.

In the present state of our knowledge (this phrase will recur frequently in our writings, but it is necessary to put "not initiated" in face of the difficulties encountered by the researcher), the traces of this Khmer influence appear only at very different epochs according to the regions studied. Thus, we find them as early as the sixth to eighth centuries up until the thirteenth century of our era in the province of Champassak--moreover there was in this region a large kingdom known as Wen-Tan in the Chinese annals--then from the tenth to the thirteenth century in the neighborhood of Vientiane, and finally from the twelfth to the fourteenth century at Luang Prabang.

[13] The most important monument of Champassak is the Vat-Phou (See appendix).

In the province of Savannakhet future explorations in the region of Keng-Kok will probably furnish valuable information. A rapid trip we made through this area revealed sites which had never been mentioned before. Apparently a strong Cham influence occurred in this province, but the question is still too new for one now to reach any conclusions.

At Vientiane, the most ancient Khmer vestiges are most probably found in the neighborhood of the pagoda called Vat Si Muong. A magnificent Khmer bust of the thirteenth century, recently discovered a few hundred meters from this pagoda, seems to confirm this hypothesis. But there again the novelty of the problem forbids any hasty conclusion.

The Khmer influences in That Luang, which had been anticipated at the time of the restoration of this monument by the French School of the Far East in 1931, begin to be revealed. The Buddha said to be that of Fertility, which is in the cloister, is no more than the

301 The use of these magic shirts is also known in Cambodia. The designs
262 usually consist of flowers, geometric figures, tools, flowers, vegetable
757 branches, and of animals. Sometimes pictures drawn from Buddhist iconography can be recognized.

[174] Apparently the origin of tattooing is to be found in totemism. By
301 analyzing the Laotian tattooing designs, [63] it has been possible to recognize traces of sun worship, as well as the mythological role of the dog. But at the present time Laotians seem only to value tattooing as an artistic ornament.

The Divining Rod.

787 Among the curios which the tourist looks for in Laos, the most
823 easily found is a carved bamboo cane. Immediately below the head,
825 which is often of chased silver, there is a sort of checkered diagram made up of twenty-five little squares. Below this divining diagram are found, in succession from top to bottom, a zebu, a horse, a rakshasha or ogre, a tiger, a buffalo, a deer, an elephant. These animals correspond respectively to the days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

It should be noted that, except for the buffalo and the deer, the others are the symbolical animals of the zodiac and correspond to the different cardinal points.

The Laotians consult these figures at different actions of their lives: choice of a wedding day, the hour for burial, etc. The diagram is used to calculate the hour, and the animals indicate the cardinal point which should be followed.

This cane is also found among the Man.

[64] THE NEW YEAR AND THE FEASTS OF THE FIFTH MONTH

527 The Laotian New Year always takes place between the 6th day
805 of the crescent moon of the 5th month and the 5th day of the crescent moon of the 6th month. The very core of the feast includes three days: the last day of the past year, the intermediate day and the New Year's day, properly so-called. The most picturesque ceremonies are those of Luang Prabang, for there tradition has been best preserved.

527 The programme of the feasts begins with a procession of royal elephants. Their heads ornamented with red and black painted designs, their drivers dressed in red tunics with yellow lapels, on their backs, the fifteen elephants go to the pagodas of Xieng Tong, Vat